

Affordable Housing is a Right!

Since 2016, the average price per bed for UCSD graduate housing has increased by 22% — the TA/GSR salary in the same period by 6%. This has led to a rent-income proportion that largely differs from the nationally adopted **30%-of-income**¹ affordability measure, herein related to the highest possible TA/GSR salary at 50% (see Figure 1). The currently touted measure of 20% under market value is invalid for a populace whose highest income is significantly lower than the county median.²

The growing discrepancy between rent and income has been due to rent increases greatly exceeding the annual TA/GSR pay adjustments, and due to the replacement of affordable housing options by larger but considerably more costly ones (see Figure 2). As a result, in 2017 alone, 432 students were displaced from North Mesa and faced overwhelming rent increases. While growth of the graduate housing portfolio is warmly welcomed, it cannot come at the cost of affordability.

The problem of housing unaffordability will severely compound in the upcoming years. The current “strategic” plan of HDH highly disadvantages graduate students by replacing the most affordable housing options by vastly more expensive surrogates.

Following this pattern, 650 graduate students will be displaced from affordable housing to vastly more expensive options in 2020 due to the closure of SGA and Rita to graduate students. Additionally, in the same year, the highest-earning graduate student employed as a TA/GSR (at 50%) is projected to spend more than 40% of their income on UCSD housing (based on the average price per bed). Compared to 2016, the average price per bed is projected to increase by 49% in 2020. These circumstances are likely to cause housing insecurity³ for graduate students.

Housing insecurity is associated with numerous, drastic detriments: poor mental health and deteriorated well-being of families⁴; low job performance⁵; and it can sharply impede recruiting efforts for new graduate students.

For these reasons, we strongly believe that the UCSD community — the leadership, faculty, staff and students — has the common interest of guaranteeing affordable housing to graduate students in order to attract the best talent and produce outstanding research results. We therefore call the UCSD community to:

- keep SGA and Rita open for graduate students as the most affordable options;
- lower the average price per bed to 30% of the TA/GSR salary (at 50%);
- couple future rent increases to the annual TA/GSA salary adjustments, and;
- subsidize rent for graduate students employed at less than 50%.

In recent years, e.g., 2013, these outcomes have been attainable; the **30%-of-income** measure has been reliably offered to graduate students in the past. We call the leadership and stakeholders to make graduate housing affordable and ensure it remains affordable, to safeguard our prosperous and thriving UCSD research community!

Affordable Housing Committee, UC Student-Workers Union

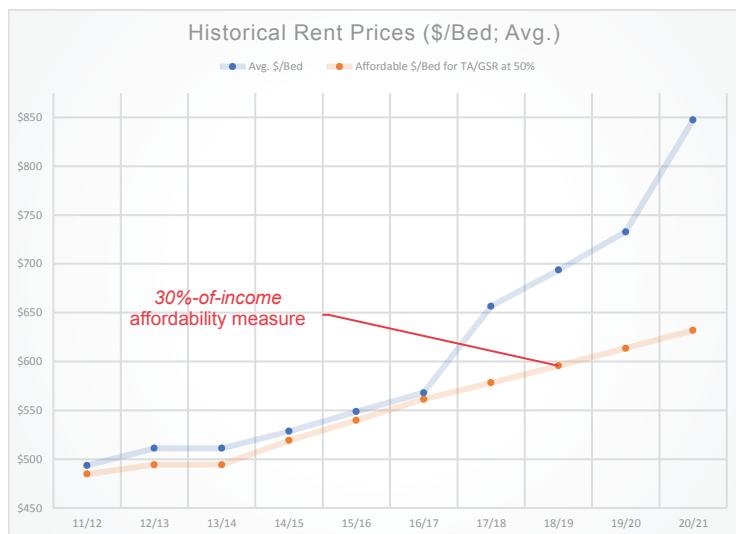


Figure 1
Conservative projection based on rent increase in 17/18.⁶

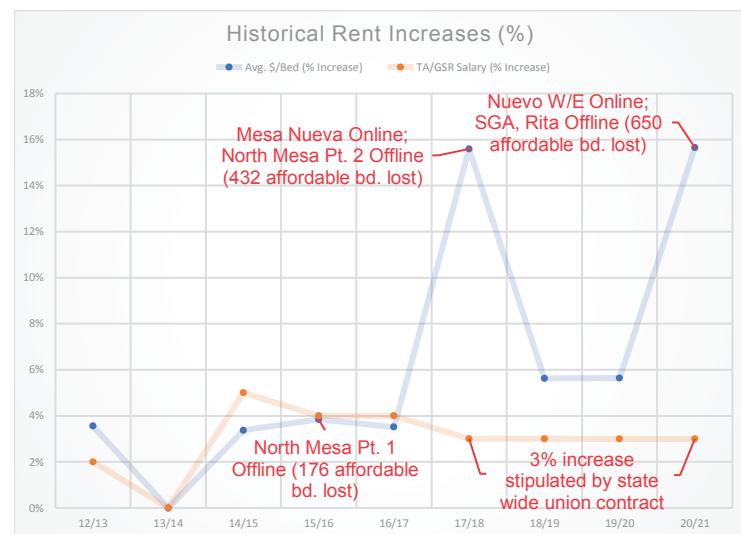


Figure 2
Conservative projection based on rent increase in 17/18.⁶

¹ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocountycalifornia/INC110217>

³ as defined in https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID2962166_code2103448.pdf?abstractid=2817626&mirid=1

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134514/>

⁵ <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondgershenson.sp2016.pdf?m=1452638824>

⁶ see <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1t4bsNeV6sDOUZZFbeZelerX9Uai3QFnr3qielJKZJ5g/edit?usp=sharing>